

April 8, 2021

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

We're writing as members of *DARE (Direct Action for Rights & Equality)* in **strong support of H-5683, H-6122, and Article 13, Section 5**. *DARE* has been organizing low-income families, living in communities of color for nearly 35 years. *DARE* began organizing families when there was a more robust welfare system, and fought to ensure sufficient benefits and dignity to the families that relied on it. *DARE* members lived through the dismantling of the social safety net in this country and in Rhode Island, predicated on a racist and patriarchal ideology, specifically of Black women and what they did or did not deserve.

That *RI Works* families continue to be offered a monthly check that keeps them in poverty and has not been revisited for 30 years, while corporate, individual, and estate taxes on the wealthiest in Rhode Island have been slashed year-over-year and tax giveaways have been lavished on private companies who promise life-sustaining jobs that never materialize, is a travesty and a shame.

Raising the monthly benefits for families on *RI Works* would cost the state a fraction of what it gives away in tax breaks and incentives to the already wealthy and corporations like CVS. A \$100 per year clothing allowance, only for children over 4 is absolutely absurd, as anyone with kids can attest. Excluding income when a *RI Works* participant first starts a job, or allowing them to attend a full two years of community college are good sense policies, that would only enable participants to pursue economic independence, of the form that so many members of the General Assembly demand low-income, working families achieve, without any acknowledgement of the context or their own role in creating it.

"I find it archaic to subject babies from a day-old to 4 years old or a third child or fourth child to be exempt from any kind of monies that a parent can receive on *RI Works*, I find it quite intelligible really that because a child is born they have to suffer the consequences of not being taken care of by a state. It almost reminds me of a child that was born 2000 years ago that had to lie in a manger. I like to also address the fact that the minimum wage is low, \$11 or \$12 an hour, which should be at least at 15 dollars an hour. Why punish a child? I wonder if you were in the circumstances of some of these families how would you feel? That's all I have to say."

Brenda Taylor, *DARE* member.

Cc: Representatives Slater, Marszalkowski, Amore, Baginski, Barros, Diaz, Edwards, Hull, Nardone, O'Brien, Quattrocchi, Ruggiero, Tobon, Vella-Wilkinson